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Biographic Report

Mohammad DAUD

President of Afghanistan

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File: Afghanistan

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BR 73-15
August 1973

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AFGHANISTAN

Mohammad DAUD

President; Prime Minister; Minister of Defense; Minister of Foreign Affairs



In the early hours of 17 July 1973 Sardar (Prince) Mohammad Daud (rhymes with loud), former Prime Minister and virtual dictator (1953-63), came to power through a well-executed and virtually bloodless military coup, ending the 40-year reign of his brother-in-law and cousin, King Mohammad Zahir. (The King, who was vacationing on the Mediterranean island of Yachia at the time, has remained in Italy, at the Embassy in Rome; his wife and family joined him on 27 July.)

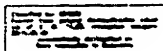
It appears that the junior officers active in the coup included Daud in their plans only at the last moment, intending him to hold figurehead status. Since assuming office, however, Daud appears to have consolidated his position in Kabul and in the provinces. Returning to power after a hiatus of 10 years, he abolished the monarchy, abrogated the 1964 Constitution and declared a republic, naming himself President, Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Fourteen members of the royal family have been sent into exile. Sardars Shah Wali Khan and Abdul Wali, two of Daud's main enemies, are either held in detention in Kabul or dead. If they are still alive, their continued presence in the country may constitute a potential threat to the regime.

The new Cabinet, termed a "peculiar hodgepodge" by US Embassy officials in Kabul, represents a compromise between Daud and the junior officers,

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but a compromise that favors Daud. The President holds the top posts and is also expected to keep the portfolio of Economic Planning. The Deputy Prime Minister and several of the lesser Ministers are known to be close to Daud. The junior officers, and two civilians thought to be sympathetic to them, hold five portfolios, including those of Finance and Interior. Should the Cabinet prove ineffective or incapable of unified action, the politically astute Daud may be able to exploit the inexperience and disunity of his colleagues.

Daud the Man

A man of decisiveness and intelligence, Daud is also temperamental, stubborn, brutally frank and egotistical. He is a hard worker and was characterized in the late 1930's as a capable, honest and efficient administrator. During his 10 years as Prime Minister he carried out his policies with energy, self-assurance and independence. He was sincerely interested in promoting the modernization and economic betterment of his country. One example of his liberal reforms was his removal of the obligation for Afghan women to wear the *chodri*, a tentlike garment and veil designed to cover the wearer from head to foot. Daud commands a considerable following in the armed forces, among former government officials and with certain student elements. Groups such as the ultraconservative religious leaders have opposed his reformist inclinations.

Nonaligned Neutral?

Reports indicate that Daud is a strong nationalist who will seek aid wherever it is available. He claims to be a nonaligned neutral, but his determination to modernize Afghanistan resulted in a heavy reliance on the Soviet Union for assistance when he was Prime Minister. He listed US military aid to Pakistan and inadequate US support for Afghanistan as the precipitating factors in his turn to the USSR. He felt that there was little danger in relying on that country for economic and military supply. According to news accounts, Daud once said that he was happiest when he could light his American cigarettes with Soviet matches.

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The Soviet position in Kabul may have been enhanced because of Daud's assumption of power, but only marginally. It is rumored that the Soviets had some forewarning of his plan to overthrow the King; more than 200 Soviet military technicians and advisers were in the country at the time, many of them working with the army units that provided the backbone of the coup. There is no evidence, however, that the Soviets either instigated or were actively involved in the coup.

Daud the President

In his first national broadcast, President Daud spoke harshly of the King's 10-year-old "experiment in democracy," claiming that it had degenerated into a regime of lies, betrayal, elitism and personal gain. He stated that the royal family had misused its powers and had caused economic, administrative and political paralysis. He said that the main priorities of his regime would be economic development and basic social reforms.

International Repercussions

Pledging to continue Afghanistan's policy of neutrality and nonalignment, Daud has nevertheless stressed his desire to find a "permanent solution" to the Pushtunistan issue with Pakistan. Pushtunistan is the name given to the Pushtu- and Baluchi-speaking areas of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, especially Pakistan's western frontier provinces. The Pushtuns are the dominant tribal group in Afghanistan, and many of them live astride the Afghan-Pakistani border. Advocates of Pushtunistan agree on neither its exact area nor their ultimate goal. Some merely want increased autonomy for the area; others want Pushtunistan to be an independent country. Daud is a longtime advocate of independence, and in 1962 US officials characterized him as emotional and irrational on this issue. When he was Prime Minister, the only public function he regularly attended was the annual celebration of Pushtunistan Day.

Before Daud staged his coup, relations between Islamabad and Kabul were already cooling, and further deterioration is likely. Mohammad Musa Shafiq,

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Daud's immediate predecessor as Prime Minister, apparently wanted good relations with Pakistan and was not particularly interested in Pushtunistan. Popular sentiment nevertheless forced him to increase anti-Pakistani propaganda, and in May 1973 Pakistan accused the Afghans of blatant interference in Pakistan's domestic affairs. Daud--unlike Shafiq--is concerned about Pushtunistan, and when he was Prime Minister he sent tribesmen and some regular troops into Pakistan in an attempt to stir up a rebellion on the frontier. Tension peaked in the early 1960's, when the two countries appeared close to war, diplomatic relations were broken, and the border was closed.

Daud's efforts were almost a total failure. Pakistani tribesmen generally did not respond, the closure of the border (designed to hurt Pakistan) cut off the bulk of Afghanistan's foreign trade, and the result was an erosion of Daud's prestige, which contributed greatly to his dismissal as Prime Minister in 1963. Since that time, the Afghans have kept alive their propaganda but have gradually shifted their position from advocating independence for Pushtunistan to advocating increased autonomy for the Pakistani frontier provinces. Daud's present plans concerning Pushtunistan are not clear. Presumably, he is more aware now of the dangers to Afghanistan and to him of an activist Pushtunistan policy.

Daud's assumption of power threatens relations between Tehran and Kabul, which have been gradually improving in the recent past. Before the coup the Shah of Iran was already concerned about Soviet influence in Afghanistan. Daud's cordial relations with the USSR may jeopardize the ratification of a pending treaty on the apportionment of the waters of the Helmand River, as well as the access to road and port facilities that the Shah has promised to Afghanistan. The Shah is likely to view any threat to Pakistan's unity as a threat to Iran.

Early Life and Career

Mohammad Daud was born in Kabul in 1909. He attended the English-language Habibia School in Kabul and studied in France during 1921-30. He

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later attended the Officers' Infantry School in Kabul. From 1932 to 1938 Daud was commanding general and Governor of the Eastern and Kandahar Provinces, where he was noted for having introduced educational and social reforms and improvements in agricultural methods. In 1939 he became commandant of the Kabul Military College, and in the early 1940's he served as commanding general of the Kabul Central Army Corps. Daud was Minister of National Defense during 1946-48 and then became Minister to France, Switzerland and Belgium. In 1949 he was reappointed Minister of National Defense and assumed the presidency of the First Group of Ministers of the High State Council.

In 1953 Daud was appointed Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Planning. King Zahir removed him in 1953 because of the Prime Minister's uncompromising policy toward Pakistan. It has been suggested that Daud could have retained his position but chose to resign in order to preserve the solidarity of the royal family.

Waiting in the Wings

Daud's retirement destroyed neither his power nor the possibility that he might use that power in an attempt to return to office. Observers believed that the presence of this powerful figure waiting in the wings eroded the public confidence needed for the successful implementation of King Zahir's "experiment in democracy" and his 1964 reform Constitution.

In August 1968 Daud and the King attempted a reconciliation. Their negotiations were unsuccessful. According to an Afghan Government official, in 1971 Daud privately expressed his impatience with the King, who he felt was destroying the country by his lack of concern and by his tolerance of corruption and immorality among members of the royal family. Daud and his brother, Prince Mohammad Naim, felt that the Constitution encouraged the royal family to engage in corruption. Prevented from holding public office, members of the royal family attempted to influence those who did.

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In a prophetic remark, Daud said that the King's heavy dependence on the army could result in the downfall of the monarchy. He accused the King of stifling ministerial initiative and maintained that his dismissal as Prime Minister in 1963 was the result of a campaign of innuendo and rumor. According to the above-mentioned Afghan official, Daud had urged the King to make necessary reforms.

Health

Daud received medical treatment in Switzerland in 1959 for what was tentatively identified as a slipped disc. Seeking additional medical aid in Vienna in 1960, he was found to be suffering from spondylolisthesis (maladjustment of the spinal column) and rheumatism, although he was reported to have appeared more spirited than sickly in pursuing a vigorous night life. Leaving Vienna in April 1960, he went to the Soviet Union Rest Center at Sochi for several weeks of rest and medical observation. In February 1961, while in Rome, Daud underwent an operation for a slipped disc. During a visit he made to England in July 1961, British officials commented on his physical fitness and mental alertness. Daud was confined to his home by an undisclosed illness for 2 weeks in August 1968. In 1972 he suffered from a bout of hepatitis, from which he recovered without complication.

Various observers have questioned Daud's mental health. In 1960 several members of the royal family referred to him as the "crazy Prince." They said that they lived in terror and dared not criticize Daud. The same sources claimed that Daud told King Zahir that the only reason he continued to be King was because he, as Prime Minister, wanted him there. Recently, a Pakistani Government official characterized Daud as "mad," literally, and claimed that the President had once had psychiatric treatment in the USSR.

A journalist recently described Daud as looking hunched and tired.

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Travel

Daud headed the Afghan delegation to the Third Session of the UN General Assembly, in Paris, in 1948. In 1953 he represented the King at funeral services for Joseph Stalin in Moscow and at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in London. He participated in the Belgrade Conference of Nonaligned Nations in September 1961. In addition to countries previously mentioned, he has visited the People's Republic of China (1957), the United States (1958), India (1959), Iran (1960) and West Germany (1961).

"Demon of the Bazaars"

Since the coup Daud has sought to exhibit his populism--and his disdain for the royal family--by insisting on being addressed as "Mr. Daud" instead of as "President." Soft-spoken and informal by nature, the President usually maintains a calm exterior but sometimes exhibits a violent temper. He is said to be loyal to his friends but is depicted as being harsh--even cruel--to enemies. As Prime Minister he was fond of inspecting shops in disguise, with the idea of ensuring the honesty of shopkeepers. As a result, he acquired the sobriquet "demon of the bazaars." According to bazaar gossip, Daud punished a baker who was overcharging for bread by having him baked alive in his own oven; a more common punishment, according to rumor, was to have unscrupulous shopkeepers nailed to a wall by their ears.

The President is a moderate drinker and a heavy smoker. During his retirement he displayed some interest in agriculture. He speaks fluent Turkish, Farsi, Pushtu and French. He has some knowledge of English, although he does not feel at ease using it.

Family

In 1934 Daud married Zenab Jan, sister of King Zahir. They have at least three sons and four daughters. One of the daughters resided in Washington, D.C., as of 1961-62. One of the sons is studying in Moscow; Daud visits him once or twice a year.

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